HIS MAJESTIES GRACIOUS DECLARATION

To all His Loving Subjects, for

LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE.

JAMES R.

IT having pleased Almighty God not only to bring Us to the Imperial Crown of these Kingdoms through the greatest difficulties, but to preserve Us by a more than ordinary Providence upon the Throne of Our Royal Ancestors; there is nothing now that We so earnestly desire, as to Establish Our Government on such a Foundation, as may make Our Subjects happy, and unite them to Us by Inclination as well as Duty; Which We think can be done by no Means so effectually, as by granting to them the free Exercise of their Religion for the time to come, and add that to the perfect Enjoyment of their Property, which has never been in any case Invaded by Us since Our coming to the Crown: Which being the two things Men value most, shall ever be preserved in these Kingdoms, during Our

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Reign over them, as the trueſt Methods of their Peace and Our Glory. We cannot but heartily wiſh, as it will eaſily be believed, that all the People of Our Dominions were Members of the Catholick Church, yet We humbly thank Almighty God, it is, and hath of long time been Our conſtant Senſe and Opinion (which upon diverſe Occaſions We have declared) that Conſcience ought not to be conſtrained, nor People forced in matters of meer Religion: It has ever been directly contrary to Our Inclination, as We think it is to the Intereſt of Government, which it deſtroys by ſpoiling Trade, depopulating Countreys, and diſcouraging Strangers; and finally, that it never obtained the End for which it was employed: And in this We are the more Confirmed by the Reflexions We have made upon the Conduct of the four laſt Reigns. For after all the frequent and preſſing Endeavours that were uſed in each of them, to reduce this Kingdom to an exact Conformity in Religion, it is viſible the Succeſs has not anſwered the Deſign, and that the Difficulty is invincible; We therefore out of Our Princely Care and Affection unto all Our Loving Subjects, that they may live at Eaſe and Quiet, and for the increaſe of Trade, and incouragement of Strangers, have thought fit by vertue of Our Royal Prerogative, to iſſue forth this Our Declaration of Indulgence; making no doubt of the Concurrence of Our Two Houſes of Parliament, when we ſhall think it convenient for them to Meet.

In the firſt Place We do Declare, That We will Protect and Maintain Our Arch-Biſhops, Biſhops, and Clergy, and all other Our Subjects of the Church of *England*, in the free Exerciſe of their Religion, as by Law Eſtabliſhed, and in the quiet and full Enjoyment of all their Poſſeſſions, without any Moleſtation or Diſturbance whatſoever.

We do likewiſe Declare, That it is Our Royal Will and Pleaſure, That from henceforth the Execution of all and all manner of Penal Laws in Matters Eccleſiaſtical, for not coming to Church, or not Receiving the Sacrament, or for any other Non-conformity to the Religion Eſtabliſhed, or for, or by Reaſon of the Exerciſe of Religion in any manner whatſoever, be immediatly Suſpended; And the further Execution of the ſaid Penal Laws and every of them is hereby Suſpended.

And to the end that by the Liberty hereby granted, the Peace and Security of Our Government in the Practice thereof, may not be indangered, We have thought fit, and do hereby ſtraitly Charge and Command all Our Loving Subjects, That as We do freely give them Leave to Meet and Serve God after their own Way and Manner, be it in Private Houſes or Places purpoſely Hired or Built for that uſe; ſo that they take eſpecial care, that nothing be Preached or Taught amongſt them, which may any ways tend to Alienate the Hearts of Our People from Us or Our Government; And that their Meetings and Aſſemblies be peaceably, openly, and publickly held, and all Perſons freely

freely admitted to them; And that they do ſignifie and make known to ſome one or more of the next Juſtices of the Peace, what Place or Places they ſet apart for thoſe uſes.

And that all Our Subjects may enjoy ſuch their Religious Aſſemblies with greater Aſſurance and Protection, We have thought it requiſite, and do hereby Command, That no Diſturbance of any kind be made or given unto them, under Pain of Our Diſpleaſure, and to be further proceeded againſt with uttermoſt ſeverity.

And for as much as We are deſirous to have the benefit of the Service of all Our Loving Subjects, which by the Law of Nature is inſeparably annexed to, and inherent in Our Royal Perſon: And that none of Our Subjects may for the future be under any Diſcouragment or Diſability (who are otherwiſe well inclined and fit to ſerve Us) by Reaſon of ſome Oaths or Teſts, that have been uſually Adminiſtrated on ſuch Occaſions: We do hereby further Declare, That it is Our Royal Will and Pleaſure, That the Oaths commonly called, *The Oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance*, And alſo the ſeveral Teſts and Declarations mentioned in the Acts of Parliament made in the 25*th* and 30*th* Years of the Reign of Our late Royal Brother King *Charles* the *Second*, ſhall not at any time hereafter be required to be Taken, Declared, or Subſcribed by any Perſon or Perſons whatſoever, who is or ſhall be Imployed in any Office or Place of Truſt either Civil or Military, under Us or in Our Government. And We do further Declare it to be Our Pleaſure and Intention from time to time hereafter, to Grant Our Royal Diſpenſations under Our Great Seal to all Our Loving Subjects ſo to be Imployed, who ſhall not take the ſaid Oaths, or Subſcribe or Declare the ſaid Teſts or Declarations in the above-mentioned Acts and every of them.

And to the end that all Our Loving Subjects may receive and enjoy the full Benefit and Advantage of Our Gracious Indulgence hereby intended, and may be Acquitted and Diſcharged from all Pains, Penalties, Forfeitures, and Diſabilities by them or any of them incurred or forfeited, or which they ſhall or may at any time hereafter be lyable to, for, or by Reaſon of their Non-conformity, or the Exerciſe of their Religion, and from all Suits, Troubles, or Diſturbances for the ſame: We do hereby give Our Free and Ample Pardon unto all Non-conformiſts, Recuſants, and other Our Loving Subjects, for all Crimes and Things by them committed or done contrary to the Penal Laws formerly made, relating to Religion and the Profeſſion or Exerciſe thereof. Hereby Declaring, That this Our Royal Pardon and Indempnity ſhall be as Good and Effectual to all Intents and Purpoſes, as if every Individual Perſon had been therein particularly Named, or had particular Pardons under Our Great Seal, which We do likewiſe Declare ſhall from time to time be Granted unto any Perſon or Perſons deſiring the ſame: Willing and Requiring Our Judges, Juſtices, and other Officers, to take Notice of and Obey Our Royal Will and Pleaſure herein before Declared.

And although the Freedom and Aſſurance We have hereby given in relation to Religion and Property, might be ſufficient to remove from the Minds of Our Loving Subjects all Fears and Jealouſies in relation to either; yet We have thought fit further to Declare, That We will Maintain them in all their Properties and Poſſeſſions, as well of Church and Abby-Lands, as in any other their Lands and Properties whatſoever.

Given at Our Court at Whitehall *the Fourth Day of* April, 1687. *In the Third Year of Our Reign.*

By His MAJESTIES ſpecial Command.

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